

Assesing the Reliability of Sources/Evidence

Remember where possible to use the correct Terminology Imply = suggests Biased = one sided Propaganda = one sided official information
Reliability = how far a source can be trusted Gaps = is important information missing? Hindsight = judgement of events after most of the facts have emerged. (after the event) Contradicts - conflicting evidence. (what they tell us opposes something) Impartial = a fair, total 'unbiased' opinion
Opinion = a belief, which may lack proof Documents e.g Official Government reports, or non-Official, such as newspapers. They are usually Primary.
From the time fo the event. The Writer: Who wrote it and when it was written will affect the reliability of a document. it may be biased if the writer is one sided, it may express only one Governments or sides point of view. Authenticity: Does the view or facts of the document contain similar facts and comments to other evidence? Is the document fact or opinion? Attitude: Remember the circumstances in which the document was written, for example the Cold War. The USA and USSR had different points of view about the same events. Strengths of Documents: Show events and attitudes at the time. Show the reactions of Governments Often first hand knowledge of events Official, Direct Views. Reflect a Government policy Usually not exaggerated Weaknesses May have a one sided, biased point of view Could be propaganda Newspapers may lack fact or balance Extracts From Textbooks Usually secondary evidence. Written after the time of the event. The Author: May be biased. Although good historians should try to be impartial Authenticity: Textbooks enjoy the advantage of hindsight, and can check facts and sources. Attitude: May be under the control of a Government. The historian may not be free to write what he/she wants. Strengths of Textbooks Can often check facts May analyse events - Advantage of hindsight Can use new evidence which has emerged Weaknesses Opinion/judgement may be incorrect May lack factual evidence Photographs The Photographer: Is the person taking the photograph working for a government, a newspaper, or simply a by-stander Authenticity: Is the photograph stage managed, and oddicial photography. This may affect reliability Attitude: Is the photograph designed to shock? Does the photograph fit the evidence or accounts of the same event? Strengths of Photographs: It may reflect the actual event It may show things which are not reflected in other evidence Gives insits into styles, appearences, etc. Weaknesses: May be contrived (made up) Lack Balance - may show one incident whcih is not typical Factual coverage may be limited May be taken to 'shock' people, and tehrefore may not reflect the truth Cartoons Author: Who drew it? When was it made? - reliability Authenticity: Do other cartoons and sources make the same comment? Attitude: In what circumstances was the cartoon made? Strengths of Cartoons A gut reaction to events. ie how people felt. Usually humourous The cartoonist may have a good knowledge of events Weaknesses: Often emotional Effect requires highlighting and exaggeration to make it humourous Factual coverage may be limited May be directed at mindset of contemporary people Is very often politically motivated Remember: One source alone is usually insufficient evidence. A number sources need to be corroborated to build up a correct version of events - the truth. Always be sceptical of what you are told from a source.

About the Author

Source: <http://crampuppy.com>